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Notes for the children
of Mary Beatrix Meeker
Taylor and Charles Isbell
Taylor

Charles I. Taylor

NOTED FOR THE OFFICE
OF THE SECRETARY OF THE
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1960

Taylor, Charles Isbell, 1880-
Notes for the children of Mary Beatrix
Meeker Taylor and Charles Isbell Taylor.
Estes Park, Colo., Privately printed at
the Monogram Shop, 1960.

GENEALOGY.

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14 p. 26 cm.

1. Taylor family.

J. City

Taylor, Charles Isbell

Notes
For The Children
of
Mary Beatrix Meeker Taylor
and
Charles Isbell Taylor

Privately Printed
at
The Monogram Shop
Estes Park, Colorado
1960

June 8th 1841 Commenced our journey
 from Lenox, Berkshire Co. Mass. for
 Iowa Territory. Came by the way of West
 Stockbridge, ^{10 miles} the railroad to ^{93 miles} Flatson, ^{by steam boat} thence
 to Albany, 80 ^{by day} thence by the Erie Canal to
 Buffalo 364 ^{by day} thence by the lake on Steamboat
 to Cleveland 184 M. 19 hours, thence by the
 Ohio Canal to Portsmouth 309 miles, 5¹/₂ Days
 thence down the Ohio river in Steamboat to the
 Mississippi river, ^{751 miles} thence up the Mississippi
 river to Fort Madison 409 miles, where we
 arrived July 14th all in comfortable health.
 thence in a wagon which Mr George Dewey came
 in, to Fort Madison for us, to his house the same
 Day, 5¹/₂ miles having travelled 2105 miles and
 been on the way 83 Days & 3 hours, including
 eleven Days which we were hindered from travelling
 to time in exchanging boats & boats waiting
 for freight, Jan 29, 30, 31, Feb. 20, 25 42.50 for Freight 112.00
 July 21st Moved from 432, Dewey house to
 Denmark 3¹/₂ miles, 10 miles from Fort Madison
 North West, July 17th

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Above is a reproduction of a page in the diary of
 Nathan Isbell, Jr., telling of the epic journey he
 and his family made in 1841, from Lenox, Mass.,
 to Denmark, Iowa Territory. In a walnut desk he
 had made a hidden compartment and secreted in
 it some two thousand dollars in gold. In this way
 he brought his small capital safely West, along
 with the family household goods.

Rec'd Oct 11 - 1977

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THE Intention of this little book is to pass on to the children of Mary Beatrix Meeker Taylor and of Charles Isbell Taylor a few thoughts concerning their ancestry, but it in no way makes an attempt to explore in detail the many lines that have been joined to form the main stream, as a geneology would, but serves to indicate what sort of people we came from.

Let it be said in the beginning that while we in this family, in common with many thousands of other children of "Early American Stock," have never cared to parade our colonial or revolutionary soldiery, our people served well and many with distinction from the earliest colonial times. Those of our descendents who might wish to do so, can readily qualify for membership in organizations magnifying such forebears.

Our ancestors lived in a far different world than ours, confined to only such movement away from their homes as was provided by walking, by horse, or by boat. Their lives, their thoughts and even their views of religion were affected by this limitation, as well as by the small amount of literature available to them. It is not so many generations back to a time when there were few in the general population who could either read or write with facility. Only the last generation before our own had generally circulated newspapers and magazines, or a reasonably wide choice of books.

Conveniences which are today everyday matters were not even in existence two generations ago. It

seems wellnigh incredible that in the relatively short time since we two were children there has occurred so great a change. We can each recall a time in our childhood when there was no electric light or power, no city water or sewage systems, no bathtubs, no washing machines, no telephones, no phonographs, no motor cars, no paved roads and, of course, no airplanes, no radios and no television. Even the telegraph was a recent invention.

Our people were compelled to expend a great deal of their time and energy merely to secure the bare necessities. There were no convenient stores to supply ordinary needs, so each family had to be as self-sufficient as possible. They heated their homes and did all their cooking by open fireplaces, for cooking stoves were not invented until after 1840. The light sources were candles and a few sperm whale oil lamps. Until considerably after the Civil War all the candles as well as the soap, were made at home. In a few large cities manufactured gas was available for lighting and cooking, some fifteen or twenty years before we were born, but not where our people lived. Kerosene, or "coal oil" lamps came into general use in about 1860.

Cattle, swine and sheep were home butchered and as much meat as possible was smoked, dried, or salted to preserve it, while all the rest had to be eaten at once or shared with neighbors, as there was no way to refrigerate or otherwise save it, except in winter. A very little ice was harvested and stored in sawdust by some, but most did not have this luxury. Our folks made their own butter and cheese from the milk of their

cows, preserved or dried their fruit and stored their vegetables in cellar or cave. They carded and spun their own wool and linen, wove their own cloth and made their own clothing, knitting their own stockings and socks. Their shoes were made by a local or a travelling cobbler, or by themselves.

They did their own doctoring in large part, using native herbs and simple remedies for which the recipes had been handed down by generations of forebears. The few physicians available had scant training or education and were far from skillful. There were no protections or treatments for such diseases as typhoid, pneumonia, smallpox, diphtheria, scarlet fever or a host of other scourges. Death took a heavy toll of the children as well as their elders.

We would all like to know more about those who came before us, but with few exceptions we are faced by only the colorless geneologies giving little more than names, birth and death dates. Of the nine or ten generations since our ancestors first came to America, we have only a hint here and there of the personalities, occupations, or activities of those whose lives are of such great interest to us.

Both Mary and Charles have many times thought as they have grown older, how unfortunate it is that they know so little of how life went on in the generation just preceding their own. His father, William, died when Charles was less than four years old and his mother, Sophronia, when he was sixteen. Mary's father and mother lived until she was a grown woman, with children of her own. But in the press of college and professional work and later in caring for her own

family, she found little time to be with her parents and to talk over their pioneering experiences.

In 1620 the Mayflower brought to Plymouth a small company of our people, who sought religious freedom in a strange and forbidding land. Among them was a boy, Peregrin White, born on the ship itself. From him is descended on the Stevens side, through some nine generations, Mary Beatrix Meeker Taylor, the mother of our flock. On the Meeker side her first ancestor came from England in 1635. Among the Meekers an early forebear named Hunt settled in Kentucky when it was still pioneer country, with no white families about. He married an Indian girl, most likely of the Shawnee tribe. From her a small amount of truly American blood was brought in. Somewhere in the early Stevens stock there was also a strain of Pennsylvania Dutch, but the remainder of Mary's ancestral line is entirely English.

Mary's mother, Phoebe Almyra Stevens, was born near Toulon, Illinois, December 12, 1846, in a log cabin with blankets over window and door, as expected glass and other building materials had not arrived in time. Mary's father, David Thomas Meeker, was born near Farmington, Illinois, April 13, 1845. Phoebe Stevens and David Meeker attended Lombard College, a Universalist school at Galesburg, Illinois and later both taught school. They were married on September 16, 1869 and lived for a time on the Meeker home place near Farmington.

In 1873 David Meeker went to Nebraska, looking for land, and bought 160 acres some three and a half miles east of Pawnee City for a total of \$1,600 of

which \$1,000 was in gold and the balance in horses. In 1874, by covered wagon, he moved with Phoebe and one child, Alice, to the new Nebraska home. There were born Fred, Lottie, Dean, Mary, and Charlie who died in infancy.

David Meeker served in the Nebraska State Legislature in the 1870s and was the chief proponent of the free school book law that to this day provides without cost the text books for every public school pupil through the elementary grades and high school throughout the state of Nebraska.

Mary Beatrix Meeker was born ^{Nov. 29, 1880} at the home near Pawnee City, Nebraska, attended the country school nearby, graduated from the Pawnee City High School in 1899 and entered The University of Nebraska that fall. She majored in physical education, which at that time included an extensive pre-medic course designed to give her an M.D. in two additional years after her B.S. Shortly before she would have graduated in 1903, she became head of physical education for the YWCA in Omaha, Nebraska.

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The first known ancestor of Charles Isbell Taylor on the Taylor side was a William Taylor, who came from the south of England in 1638. We know that in 1649 he was married to Mary Merriam and was a land owner near Concord, Massachusetts. On the Isbell side the first known ancestor was Robert Isbell who had land granted to him in Salem, Massachusetts in 1637. The ancestry of Charles appears to be entirely English.

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Charles's mother was Sophronia Elvira Isbell, born at Lenox, Massachusetts, November 16, 1834. His father was William Taylor, born December 21, 1830 at Enosburg, Vermont. When Sophronia was about seven years old, in 1841, her father, Nathan Isbell, Jr., moved his family from Lenox to Denmark, Iowa Territory. (See reproduction of a page in his diary telling of this trip).

William Taylor's father and mother died in far Northern Vermont when he was about twelve years old. Until coming to Denmark, Iowa, in 1852, he worked for various relatives and others, making his living while going to school. At Denmark, both he and Sophronia attended Denmark Academy, a Congregational college. Later he farmed and Sophronia taught school for a time. They were married in December, 1855, by Rev. Asa Turner, a member of the famous Andover Band, and went to a farm that William had bought near Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. In 1859, with one son Thomas Herbert, always known in the family as "Herbert," they moved by covered wagon to Weeping Water, Nebraska Territory, where they lived until after the Civil War, and during which time were born Frederic, Alice, and Harriet. With five others the Taylors founded at Weeping Water the second Congregational church started in Nebraska.

In 1866, because of the need for schools, the Taylors moved to Lenox, Iowa where George was born. Later they moved to Cromwell, Iowa where Emma was born and where they were among the founders of another Congregational church. William

had begun building up a nursery producing fruit and ornamental trees and shrubs, and in 1874 moved to Creston, Iowa because of the better railroad and other facilities needed for his growing business. The daughter Emma died in 1879. William died in 1884.

Charles was born December 9, 1880, finished sixth grade in the Creston schools, and went to Wilmette, Illinois with his mother in 1893. There he finished eighth grade and went to work in Chicago at the age of fourteen for four dollars a week. He worked for some two years, meanwhile doing a year or more of high school by attending night classes. In the fall of 1897 Charles went to Lincoln, Nebraska to live in the home of his brother Frederic and attended high school. He entered The University of Nebraska in the fall of 1899, majoring in civil engineering but later changed to journalism, leaving the University in 1902 to enter business.

Mary and Charles were married June 19, 1906 at the Meeker home in Pawnee City, Nebraska and began their life together in Kirkwood, Missouri, a St. Louis suburb. Subsequently they moved to one and another nearby communities and finally, in 1919, came to Boulder, Colorado. Of their children, Ruth Isbell was born in Kirkwood, Missouri, April 9, 1907. David Meeker was born west of St. Louis proper, February 6, 1909. Charles Frederic was born in Ferguson, Missouri, February 9, 1913. Richard Dean was born in Webster Groves, Missouri, September 2, 1914. Mary Charlotte was born in Boulder, Colorado, September 16, 1919.

The people who settled in Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska as pioneers, were sound and substantial, of the same racial stock that had earlier settled the New England coast. They brought law and order opened up the land, built homes, established schools and churches, founded towns, and made the new country a desirable place in which to live. They brought West some of the comforts from their former homes and added thereto as rapidly as their growing resources permitted. Their struggles with the difficulties and hardships, their privations and disappointments we can scarcely realize, but they kept a firm faith in the future, and built a foundation of stability and comfort for which we should ever be grateful. To confuse any of our people with that small group of adventurers and desperadoes whose exploits color the West more or less fictitiously, is the greatest of errors.

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(Following are some random notes illustrative of life among our own people in an earlier day.)

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Mary's great grandmother White told Phoebe, then about twelve years old, of returning revolutionary soldiers passing by, weary, famished and with bleeding feet wrapped in old rags. Her family gave them new wrappings for their feet and great grandmother White, then seven years old, ground huge quantities of parched corn between two small mill stones to make a hot drink, substitute for coffee, to go with the food set before the soldiers.

David Meeker had little cash after paying for his farm and necessary tools. To buy a hundred feet of lariat rope, a straw hat and some stout work boots he went to a small store in Pawnee City and asked for credit until his crops were harvested in the fall. The storekeeper refused, to which David remarked, "You don't seem to have much faith in our country around here." He cut the order to fit his cash, buying only fifty feet of rope and a straw hat. He worked all summer in bare feet, including stacking wheat and oats, and until the soles of his feet were "hard as horn." In the fall he sold some hogs, and remarked to the family that he could have then bought out the store, building, stock in trade and all, and with money left.

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Driving along a Pawnee City street with Charles one day, David Meeker pointed at a handsome church and remarked, "I helped build that church, for I paid twenty-five percent interest on a loan from the banker who was the biggest contributor to the building fund."

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In the early days fresh meat was scarce in the fall, so David Meeker fixed a tilting lid on a barrel and fastened a little corn on it. When a prairie chicken lit, the lid tipped the bird inside, and there were lots of prairie chickens!

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Mary and her brother Dean sewed literal miles of cloth strips into rag carpet material. These strips were about an inch wide and of all sorts of cloth saved for the purpose. The sewing had to be done with great care or the strips would separate when the neighbor

who did the weaving started her work. At seven Mary or Dean could thread a needle and sew neatly. The sewn strips were wound into balls weighing a pound each, and for each ball the children received five cents "spending money."

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When Mary was about thirteen she cooked for a crew of ten men digging water pipe ditches on the farm, and baked thirty-five pies during one week. At another time she had to get down from a high hook a piece of beef weighing perhaps sixty pounds, and thaw it out in the kitchen so she could cut off steaks for the men. She found a rocking chair a big help in the moving of that huge piece of beef. Children used to help a great deal with family duties.

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By planting osage orange hedges and laying the twigs and branches David Meeker fenced his farm before barbed wire was invented, and had hedges so high and tight that no farm animal could get through. For many years a prominent early day Nebraskan, J. Sterling Morton, offered a considerable annual cash prize during the State Fair, for the best hedge in the state. Regularly David Meeker won this prize.

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Nathan Isbell, Jr., grandfather of Charles, was a strong abolitionist, and to cover his activities was a distributor of bibles and literature for the American Tract Society, working from his home in Denmark, Iowa. In his light spring wagon he made frequent trips across the nearby state line and south down into Missouri, a slave state. Ten year old Sophronia had

been warned by her parents never to go into the wood shed, but one day she disobeyed and found two negro men on a straw bed in the corner. Then, for the first time she understood what her father was up to. He was operating a "station" on the Underground Railroad and bringing up from Missouri one or two slaves each trip. These fugitives were later picked up by the next man north on the "Railroad" and eventually found their way to Canada and freedom. It was risky business for Nathan, who would have been promptly hung or shot if caught, but he kept it up until before his death in 1856.

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In the late 1850s Nebraska Territory was pioneer country indeed, and while neighbors around Weeping Water were often some distance apart, they tried to keep in close contact with each other, in case any emergency arose. Once Sophronia noticed Indians crowded around the house of a neighbor a mile or so distant, so she put on her sunbonnet and hurried over for she knew the woman was timorous and greatly feared Indians. Sophronia pushed in through the crowd to find the neighbor snivelling, crying and shakily baking biscuits as fast as she could, saying through her tears that she was afraid the Indians would surely kill her unless they got lots of biscuits. Snatching a rolling pin and stretching to her full five feet, two, Sophronia shouted, "Get out!" The Indians left hastily and the woman, still trembling, said "How did you dare to do that?" Sophronia replied, "They're only Pawnees, and won't hurt anybody."

During the Civil War the draft did not apply to the territories, so only volunteers went into service from Nebraska. A single man, neighbor of the Taylors and living alone with his mother, agreed to go into service if William and another neighbor would take over his mail route between Weeping Water and the river, and give his pay to his mother. They were glad to agree and all went well until rumors reached the settlements that the rebels were stirring up all the Indians on the plains and attacks were to be expected. (To our people the Civil War was, "The War of the Rebellion" and all Confederates were "Rebels"). Away for the week on his turn with the mail, William was not available so Sophronia thought maybe Old Spot the family dog might make a good sentinel. As a test she had a neighbor man, who looked after the stock when William was away, wrap himself in a blanket to appear like an Indian. When he came around the corner of the house, Old Spot gave one yelp and ran for cover. They decided he was not useful, but a few days later some scouts returned from the west to report no trouble and everybody drew a sigh of relief.

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Prairie fires swept across the grasslands in the early days, started by lightning, or possibly by the Indians seeking to stir up game. On more than one occasion William hastily hitched his team to a plow in the middle of the night and turned several furrows around his property to stop the flames.

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Grasshoppers and drought were a yearly cause for worry to both the Meeker and Taylor families,

because neither had any reserves to draw upon and food shortages were an ever present possibility.

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In the 1850s and 1860s a circuit riding minister of the Congregational church, Rev. Pickett, used to visit Weeping Water at intervals and stay over with the Taylors. Once William filled a tick with straw at the stack, to provide the minister a bed. At breakfast next morning, Rev. Pickett reported that something seemed to keep moving about in the mattress under him all night long. William took the mattress outside and opened it. A blacksnake crawled out.

During the Nebraska years there was never a doctor professionally in the Taylor home, even when the children were born, except upon the one occasion when the father, William, was dangerously ill. In telling about it later, Sophronia said that she had decided to send for a doctor. A woman neighbor, in to help with things, offered the comment that, "It will cost the price of a cow to have the doctor," to which Sophronia replied that she considered her husband and his life to be more valuable than a cow. Whether this met with the approval of the neighbor is not of record.

Family names that may enable those interested to check genologies.

Meeker line (MBMT 10th generation from England)

Potter, Preston, Denman, Miller, Hunt.

Stevens line (MBMT 9th generation from England)

White, How, Barnum, Starr, McLean, Rice.

Taylor line (CIT 9th generation from England)

Merriam, Whitaker, Pellet, Perham, Boutell, Lund, Spaulding, Nichols, Adams, Jefts, Kidder.

Isbell line (CIT 8th generation from England)

French, Carter, Smith Jarvis, Kelsey, Parmelee, Ward, Griswold, Wilson, Hamlin, Hanaday.

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